

# THE QUIVER

Saturday, April 24. 1869.



"The old servant lingered to brush up the hearth."—p. 452.

## UNDER FOOT.

BY ALTON CLYDE, AUTHOR OF "MAGGIE LYNNE," ETC.

### CHAPTER X.—NOT FOR MONEY.

"SIR, am I to understand that you mean to offer me money for what I did to-night?"

"Certainly! my exchequer will afford it, and you have a right to such an acknowledgment."

"No, I have not," said the young man, steadily returning his look; "your thanks gave me sufficient acknowledgment, for I did no more than I would do again for the meanest beggar, if I saw him in danger."

"That feeling does you credit, still it is no reason why you should refuse to take what might be a benefit to you and your friends. These are not the days for romantic sentiment to be carried too far; and, excuse me, but I have an idea that your circumstances do not warrant your being indifferent about money."

Again the quivering of the sensitive lips, and a deeper dye of crimson in the hot cheeks; still the proud young head was held erect, and the voice spoke out without break or tremor.

"You are right, sir, I am poor, perhaps poorer than you think, and I am not indifferent about money; still I cannot think of being paid for doing a simple act of humanity: that is not for buying or selling."

"But if I give it you?"

"Then it is like taking alms; and rather than that, I would prefer to—"

"Starve, I suppose you are going to say," struck in the old man, with a cynical smile creeping round his lips.

"No, sir, that is a strong word, for I cannot judge what I might do in such an extremity. I meant to say that I would rather work."

"Ah! but with your peculiar ideas it is likely that you would be over-scrupulous about the sort of work you would condescend to do."

"Oh, no—no! there you mistake me," broke in the young man, eagerly and hurriedly; "I would do anything by which I could fairly earn wages. Six months ago, I might have thought some nonsense about my own abilities, but that has been crushed out of me. My mother struggled hard to have me educated for a higher position. But now I am ready to take the hardest work that my strength will let me do, and begin at the very lowest step of the ladder."

"Indeed. May I ask why?"

"Because I should be always trying to climb up," said the young man, proudly; "and if the chance is once given me, I feel sure that I shall succeed."

"Well, suppose it is in my power to help you to such a chance, would you cast it back as you did my offer of the money?"

He might have read his answer in the eager eyes.

"Oh, sir, if you would only be my friend in that way! I have so often wished that some one would have enough faith to try me. I would—" Here he checked himself, adding, "But this seems like boasting about myself. I only meant to say that I would do my best."

"No one would expect you to do more," replied the listener, gravely.—Commenting to himself, "At last I have stumbled upon a singular specimen, quite original, and not to be met at every street-turning." Aloud he said, "In the event of my being able to serve you, I should require to know your name, where you were last employed, and a good deal

concerning yourself; and on the other side, you will be entitled to know something about me. Now, whom do you suppose me to be?"

The young man hesitated, as he replied, "The manager of this firm, or—or—perhaps one of the partners."

"Ah! then perhaps you wish me to recommend you to Mr. Crawton?"

The candid eyes clouded, and the reply came falteringly, "Thank you, sir; but I am afraid it would do little good in my case. I know that I should have very little chance of gaining his favour."

The old man gave him a curious look, as he said, "You seem to hold him in dread as a very forbidding personage. How is it?"

"I cannot explain all, but I have private reasons for knowing that he is hard and stern, and that I have no chance of his favour."

"We shall see," returned the other, hurriedly. "I have great respect for the head of this house, and I am inclined to think that you wrong him; however, as I said, we shall see. Be here by ten o'clock in the morning. My word will have great weight, and I promise to do my best for you. But I must have your name."

It was given with some hesitation, "Hugh Crawton."

He was not prepared for the effect which it produced. The old man started as if he had received an unexpected blow.

"Eh! what! Hugh Crawton! is your father's name Robert?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it possible! Then you are the son of—"

"Daniel Crawton's only brother," added the young man, hastily. "That is why I said I knew him to be hard and stern. My father offended him many years ago, and he has never forgiven him. We have all felt the effect of his harshness."

"Then I suppose his name is a byword of bitterness in your house."

"No; my mother is a Christian, and her influence would forbid that."

The old man answered, with a strange twitching about the muscles of his mouth, "So much the better; those enmities are not good to hand down as family legacies. Now I think you may wish me good night. Come to-morrow morning at the hour named, and we will see what can be done. Now take your hat, and go quietly down, speaking to none as you pass out, and neither asking nor answering questions. You will easily find your way."

Thus they separated. It was not long before the young man was speeding homeward, his heart beating high with alternating hope and fear, while the old man paced the room with a steady, monotonous tramp, which he kept up without cessation, talking excitedly to himself, with his strong, sinewy hands crushed tightly together.

## CHAPTER XI.

## WOMAN'S ENDURANCE.

"My dear, you astonish me! to think that you have actually written to him without informing me!"

So spoke Robert Crawton, with unwonted energy, sitting up on his couch, his eyes bright with excitement, and the feverish, hectic colour flushing his hollow cheeks. His wife stood beside him with an open letter in her hand, which she had just been reading aloud. The room had no light except that of the fire, and a solitary mould candle burning on the little work-table. Thus, Mrs. Crawton standing partially in the shadow with her face turned from him, he could not see the pained look that clouded her soft eyes as she answered—

"Robert, is it possible that you mistake my motive in this? Can it be needful for me to say that I withheld the knowledge from you because I could not tell it without revealing the trouble, of which I wished you to know nothing until the worst was passed, as it is now, when the money is paid, and those dreadful men gone away? Robert, you cannot realise what agony their presence gave me; I was in such fear of them coming near this room, or that something might arise to betray the truth to you."

He answered with a deprecating movement of the white, helpless hands, which had accomplished so little for himself or others.

"I knew we must be getting miserably poor, but I never dreamed it would come to this, that we could sink so low; sheriff's officers here in the house, actually in possession, and me to suspect nothing of what was going on!"

"Was it not better for you to be so spared, dear Robert," replied the gentle comforter, passing her hand caressingly over his thin light hair, plentifully sprinkled with grey; "better to remain in happy ignorance of that new trouble? Judging your feelings by my own, I knew how it would pain you, and that made me anxious to keep it secret until I could tell it as trouble that was past."

"Yes, my dear, I know that you meant it kindly, and that it was all done for the best, still it seems sometimes like putting me aside, and—in this matter of the letter, I think I had a right to be told that you intended writing to Daniel for assistance. It has turned out that you did a wise thing, but I should like to have known beforehand. Did you keep a copy of the letter sent to him?"

"I did," was the low-spoken answer, accompanied by a stifled sigh, which he did not hear, and a rush of silent tears that welled up slowly into the large tender eyes, but were not suffered to fall; while he, absorbed in his narrower world of self, and chained down to its lower range of thoughts and feelings, with all the sordid earthly littlenesses clinging to him, could not rise to the higher level of that nobler nature, nor comprehend the finer qualities which raised her so far above him. Loving her as he did,

in his own way, and holding her value above all others, he had never rightly understood nor measured the real worth of the devoted wife who had been the one guiding star of his life, clinging to him through all his reverses, and finding always such a generous shield for his weaknesses and moral infirmities, believing in him, as only a loving woman would, and day by day paying out the wealth of her rich heart in unnumbered self-sacrifices, which he had learnt to accept as his right.

That little scene chronicled one of the saddest phases of her wifely experience, and shadowed out the trial harder to bear than her poverty, which had helped to bind on her fair matron brow the crown of sorrow which she wore so meekly. And he went on, passively submitting to be nursed and cared for, making his petty exactions, unconscious that he was guilty of any injustice, and never dreaming how often his words had cut into her heart like pointed arrows.

Again the thin, querulous voice took up the thread of half-implied reproach.

"I am glad you thought of doing that, my dear, for it shows I was a little considered, not that I ever complain of any intentional neglect or slight from you; still it is better than if you had quite ignored my wishes on the subject. Knowing my brother's temper as I do, it was natural that I should want to hear how you had managed the delicate negotiation. It was not a pleasant task for you to undertake. I never liked the idea of asking favours from Daniel, his manner was always so crushing. In all my difficulties I have only applied to him twice for money, and then you may remember I was sorely driven; well, it was granted me in such a repelling way that I said I would never ask again. Did you write the letter in my name?"

"Yes."

"But of course he would know the handwriting was yours; that was why the answer came so quickly, and whatever there is civil in the letter is meant for you, not me."

"Robert!"

There was a world of expression in that single word, wounded dignity and sorrowful reproach, as she laid her hand on his arm, and looked into his face with her true, steadfast eyes. His gaze fell before hers, and he put up his hands, as if in protest against what he guessed she was about to say. Through life he had always cherished his own sensitive nerves, and done his best to shirk the doing of unpleasant tasks, and the hearing of unpleasant things as regarded himself.

"Don't—don't! if you love me, Mary! I never can bear that look in your eyes, it is worse than if you got downright angry, and loaded me with reproaches; if my words have hurt you, put it down to my blundering, think it a mistake, anything, except that I meant to be unjust to you."

She answered, with her hand still upon his arm, "Your words did hurt me, Robert, for they seemed to imply doubt, cruel doubt, of me and my motives, and they brought with them a shadow that should never come between you and me."

"I could not help it, Mary; you know he loved you in the old time—loved you as he never loved another woman before or since. Remembering that, and thinking what would be your position now, if you had been his wife instead of mine, I find myself wondering if you do not sometimes regret your choice; and then, perhaps I am a little jealous."

"Jealous!" She repeated the word, holding up her fair, matronly head, with a flush of heightened colour in her pale face. "That is unworthy of yourself; your brother, whom you know to be a man of high honour, in spite of his peculiarities, and most unjust to me, the mother of your children, and your wife of twenty-five years. Tell me, if you can remember anything in my life that gives colour to these doubts—if you have not always found me faithful to you and yours. I could go on enduring, through all my days, coldness, neglect, hard words—anything except distrust; where I am loved I must be trusted and believed in."

She was unusually agitated, and betrayed it in her look and tone. It was not often that quiet, undemonstrative nature revealed so much of its inner depths, nor allowed its strong currents of feeling to be so deeply moved upon the surface. The invalid suffered himself to sink back to his usual reclining position, pressing his hand on his side, and apparently breathing with difficulty, as he wailed out his fretful remonstrance with the injured look and tone which he always used when he pitied himself as a domestic martyr, and cast himself on his physical weakness as a ground of exemption from the common duties and obligations that were binding upon people in the enjoyment of health and other advantages which he had not.

"My dear, this talk of yours is doing me more harm than I can tell; you know I am not strong enough to bear this kind of excitement, it always brings the dreadful ache in my side; but I have no right to complain. What matter if it does hasten the end? it will relieve you of a burden; for I know that I am now a clog upon you all."

It was a characteristic speech, full of the egotism which had perhaps been fostered in him by the devotion which ministered so constantly to his wants. Mrs. Crawton's face did not change. She stooped down, made his cushions comfortable, and softly wiped the damp from his forehead as she spoke. None would have guessed from her quiet manner how sorely he had wounded her.

"Robert, I cannot answer words like those. Let them remain as they have been spoken, if you cannot find their contradiction in mine and your children's lives, so far as we are associated with you."

He looked at her anxiously, her hand was still fluttering about him with its gentle touches. He clasped it with his wasted fingers, and stroked her hair in a childish conciliating way, saying—

"Forgive me, Mary, something seems to be dividing us to-night; perhaps it is my own fault. I always say the wrong things at the wrong times. Daniel used to tell me that I was miserably short of tact; but forget it all now, and kiss me, dear wife."

That was his way, to cast random arrows, then seek to disarm them of their sting. He might have known that wounds are more easily made than healed.

She said nothing, only left her hand passively in his, and kissed him.

At that moment the door-bell rang, and presently the voice of Hugh was heard in the passage. Then Mrs. Crawton quietly released herself, saying, "There is Hugh. Before he comes in here, I must read you the copy of my letter to your brother. I have it ready."

"Not to-night, Mary," he replied, hastily. "I am satisfied, and I don't think that I care about seeing the letter after all."

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While this scene was passing beside her father's sofa, Margaret, who had just said "good night" to Charles Marston, stole quietly back to the room where they had held their long tête-à-tête that evening, and sinking into the chair which she had quitted not many minutes before, gave herself up to a train of sorrowful thoughts.

"His pictures, always about his pictures, and the success he hopes to win. I fancied to-night that he was almost ready to reproach me for my apparent want of sympathy and enthusiasm. What means this heartache? Dear Nelly would call it want of trust; but I cannot help it—the fear that something will divide us, as the broader light falls upon his way. Does Charles really love me as he says, or is he only deceiving himself and me? Fame, fortune, a painter's ambition—does he hold me first or second to these? Time will prove. But I cannot hide it any longer from myself. I love him dearer—dearer than life."

So thinking, with her brow bent wearily on her hand, and her work lying unheeded on the table—an unwonted state of things for busy Margaret—Chriss found her when she came in with coals for the fire, which was fast dying out for want of attention. The old servant lingered to brush up the hearth, watching Margaret with a pucker of anxiety on her rugged face. She was longing to ask what ailed her, but somehow Miss Margaret was not like her mother; she had a way that put people at a distance. And she knew just as well as if she had been told that it was something wrong with Mr. Charles, perhaps a quarrel. "That came of girls worriting their heads about young men. If Miss Margaret had only taken

warning by her own mother, who had never known anything but trouble since she let that bit of gold be put round her finger. But there, it was no use; daughters would go on falling in love and getting married, in spite of anything their mothers could tell them."

This concluded her cogitations, and with a sigh over its utter hopelessness, Chriss gave up the subject.

There was another besides Margaret Crawton who had troubled musings that night. Charles Marston, the artist, in his bachelor sitting-room, stood leaning his elbow on the low mantelshelf, with a moody contraction of his broad brow, and a pained expression in his eyes that Margaret would have been sorry to see.

"I cannot think what has come over Margaret," he murmured. "Something told me that she was not herself to-night. She seemed thoughtful and sad, and did not enter into my plans with her usual spirit. Then she talked some nonsense about their

poverty, and the change in our positions. Can it be that she doubts me? No, I will not wrong her by that thought. Yet, oh, Margaret! if there is a shadow on your heart, why not show it to me? A woman's instinct should tell you, without any words of mine, that the one dream of my life, the first aim of my ambition, is to make a fit home for you. I don't believe in any man rushing blindly into marriage, without provision for the future. If he truly loves a woman, let him put his shoulder to the wheel, that the path which she is to tread with him may be as smooth as he can make it."

At this point the artist took pencil and paper, and sketched.

Thus were two young people who had given heart for heart, unconsciously surrounding themselves with shadows, which a few frank words from each would have dispelled; troubled with doubts and fears which grew out of their very love, and standing almost on the verge of what might become a painful misunderstanding of each other.

(To be continued.)

## THE GROWTH OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

BY THE REV. J. STOUGHTON.

### I.—"FIRST THE BLADE."

**W**HAT a great deal lies at the bottom of experimental religion, which it is beyond our power to explain, who will deny? The period of its commencement, the manner of its manifestation, the stages of its progress, may be marked and understood, but when we have comprehended its qualities and nature, as far as possible, there is left an unknown residuum of spiritual facts defying analysis. What, after all, is that which we call *spiritual* life—as distinguished from the other phases of intellectual, and emotional, and practical, and moral life—belonging to us as human beings, from the very constitution of our nature? We know its qualities, but what is it *essentially*? Is it, properly speaking, any new power communicated to us by divine grace, or is it merely a new disposition, a new bias given to the faculties which constitute our human birth-right? And as to its origin, how does this new life begin in the soul? What is *precisely* the action of truth upon the minds of men? What part, or what condition of our minds does it touch first? Where does the life-giving process commence, with the affections or with the understanding? What is the agency of the Holy Spirit, as distinguishable in thought from the instrumentality of divine truth? Theologians have discussed these questions again and again; and they are referred to now, not for the purpose of sug-

gesting a solution, nor with a view to estimating their importance, but simply in order to show that when we come to think deeply and closely of that which underlies the phenomena of religious consciousness and character, much presents itself which awakens perplexing inquiry, much which produces hesitation, doubt, wonder, and a sense of ignorance.

Some, perhaps, may hastily assume that such questions indicate the unreality of the whole subject. It is all mere sentimentalism, mere imagination, they will be ready to say. But those who believe in the Bible, who are conscious of spiritual life, who can say from deep conviction like the Apostle Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am," can never be affected by the scepticism of other people about what they have never experienced themselves—any more than we, who can use our eyes, could be disturbed by doubts as to the reality of human vision, suggested by a blind man, on hearing doubtful disputations respecting optic nerves, laws of light, or theories of colour. The common-sense answer in the Gospels, "Once I was blind, and now I see," suffices to dispose of a good many difficulties, suggested by those who stand outside the circle of spiritual life.

But what now suggests itself is, that whatever mysteriousness may cling to what has been called "the life of God in the soul of man," is only analogous to the mysteriousness which clings to

life in all the gradations of the ascending scale, from the very lowest to the very highest, from the life of the meanest plant to the life of the noblest angel. Our Lord's parable of secret growth teaches us to think of the mysteriousness of life in its lowest form. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." Perhaps the mystery of growth is most obvious amongst those forms of life which are most humble; perhaps because we have so much less to do for the preservation of vegetable than of animal existence,—because a blade of wheat receives from us so much less attention, so much less care than a little child, "*because the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself.*" We are pre-eminently impressed with the inexplicable mystery of life, as we go out "to meditate in the field at eventide."

The mystery of spiritual life, then, is but analogous to the mystery of vegetable life in its incipient and following stages. The wonder which lies close to the lowest round of nature's ladder, is but a sample of the wonder bound to its topmost step. God's works are but partially, can be but partially, seen by man. "Lo, these are parts of his ways: how little a portion is heard of him." The mystery of life from end to end, in "the blade" and in the soul, on earth and in heaven, is a divine mystery. In conspicuous light, does the divinity of the wonder appear in the origin and progress of true religion? Truly "the finger of God" is here. But the *divine* aspect of the mystery does not diminish it; rather it enhances it. Seeing so much of God in regenerated and spiritual life, we find, indeed, the mystery *shifted*, but that is all. It is lifted and placed, like a sealed book, on a higher shelf; it is far from being, on that account, more easily reached.

But a wise man, as in things natural so in things spiritual, will be content to walk amidst the twilight, perhaps the deepening gloom of mystery. He knows that nature is a system imperfectly understood; and he is, therefore, prepared to find that religion, that Christianity, that the grace of God in the soul of man, is a method of divine operation also imperfectly understood.

But that will not hinder him from regarding it as a blessed reality, and acting upon it just as confidently as he would, if he understood everything belonging to it from first to last. So far as he has to "walk by faith and not by sight," he sets his foot as firmly on the ground, as he might if he saw distinctly every inch of pathway which he has to tread.

Nor will an intelligent Christian fail to make a practical use of the mysteriousness of spiritual life from its commencement; it will save him from

a misapplication of care. A man casts seed into the ground, after having prepared the soil, and then he leaves the hidden process to be wrought out by the Lord of nature. He attends to his business, he labours and rests, he sleeps and also rises night and day, anxious only about his own duties as a farmer or a labourer, not anxious about divine operations. He leaves the weather, he leaves the laws of life and growth in the hands of God. And thus "the seed springs and grows up he knoweth not how." This fact is full of religious instruction. God undertakes to carry on his work in our souls if we *comply with certain conditions*. That compliance is our business, the mystery of the growth of life within is his. Some good people are not content with doing so far as they can the will of God, they are wanting to know how God is doing his own will; they distress themselves respecting the operations of grace, when they ought to be content with its signs. They are like children pulling up plants to see how they grow. Let them alone. Do your part. Attend to the sacred duties of life, pray to God, trust in the Holy Spirit, and grace will be sure to grow up, you know not how.

And if the Christian be a minister, or a worker in some other way, as every Christian having the means ought to be, he will not fret and distress himself about what must remain a mystery in this world, he will "cast seed into the ground" and leave it; he will take care to till the ground; he will take care to sift the seed before he sows it, lest he should scatter both tares and wheat. But having thus fulfilled his duties as an honest, diligent husbandman, he will leave the rest with God.

The blade is a thing of *promise*. Look at its thin, springy, graceful leaf of softest green, how it folds up within itself latent nascent beauty and power. Though slender, though frail, what capabilities it has of endurance and growth; how it will bear rain, frost, nipping winds, and sultry heat; how, by that which would seem one moment to threaten its life, will it be nourished the next; what a strength and persistency of life it possesses, so that it will make good its position, and hold its own, and climb up into the air in a manner most marvellous. And that flat, single spire of grass will be found to be a sheath hiding within itself a swelling, expanding substance, which will unfold into an organised form of life, most curious, wonderful, and productive. And as you think of all that, think also of something else of which it is the type.

What promise there is in the early life of grace! It may be very weak—its manifestations may be feeble in the extreme; but judge not of it by present appearances, but by its inward capabilities and powers. It may become strong and vigorous; and, in its latter end—although, preserving its

identity, only developing what was hidden in it from the beginning—may be as different from what it was at first, as the golden ear differs from the green blade. The piety of a man just born again of the Spirit of God may strike one as so frail, that the thought of what it may have hereafter to encounter produces the utmost fear. We sometimes tremble for new converts, as we see them exposed to the trials of the world—the snares of sense, the lusts of the flesh, and the subtlety of the devil. But if there be genuine grace in the convert's soul, a power is there sufficing to overcome all dangers. The religion of the young, of a child brought up in a godly house, must be immature and tender—a mere “blade” of corn. It may be easily crushed, nipped, torn, stunted; but while it lives, you cannot destroy all promise. No one can tell what lies in the future history of our children—where they will go and what they will suffer. God, in mercy, keeps from them, and from us, the prescience of their coming years. It would be too much for those dear ones, too much for our parental hearts, were there given us a second-sight of what is to happen hereafter to the boys and girls, awhile ago sitting merrily round the Christmas hearth, dancing merrily round the Christmas tree. But this we know, and this we would impress upon them, that in the blessed religion of Jesus Christ, rooted in their hearts by divine grace, a power exists which will make them strong for trial, strong for temptation, strong for duty, strong for life with all its possibilities, strong for death with all its issues.

We say of our children as we think of what they are by nature—of their beauty, comeliness, grace; their quickness, curiosity, and attainments; their fond and pure affections, “They are full of promise!” We say of elder ones, just starting in life, the first stage of education over, the new education of practical life, with its wear and tear, all to come; just going forth harnessed for the battle, equipped for the journey, bound with a rich outfit for the great voyage, “They are full of promise!” but, after all, the great promise of life is to be found in the renewing grace of God—in the seeds of piety sown by a mother's instructions, watered by a father's prayers; in holy religious influences which have fallen like dew—which have descended like sunshine—which have swept over the spirit as a wind from heaven; in Sabbath worship, home worship, secret worship; the worship of the soul which has gone up unseen, but has been heard saying, “My Father, my Father, be thou the guide of my youth.”

We often use the words “hopeful” and “promising” as though they were synonymous. They are not. There may be hope without promise. “But we are hopeful,” says some broken-hearted

fathers and mothers, as they deplore the wandering of their children. Thank God for the comfort of that. In many senses whilst there is life there is hope; but the comfort is cold and poor, if there be not promise beneath hope. The pure, the virtuous, the brave, the devout, the faithful, the Christ-like disciples of Christ—they are full of hope, because they are full of promise. In the “blade” already we see the promise of the “ear.”

And what *is* the promise?—is it human or divine? The really truthful promise of future goodness in any one must be divine *as well as* human. The expression, the utterance of the promise, is human; the substance, the basis of the promise, is divine. Not on the fallen and degenerate nature of human beings can we ever rest as the solid groundwork of hope touching future life: that solid groundwork is only found in the grace of God. And here, again, analogy helps our thought, strengthens our faith. What is the secret of promise, with regard to the life which thus begins—“*first the blade?*” Is it not a law of God—a divine principle, or power? not a something in nature independent, but a something in nature springing out of the *first great Cause*, and by Him sustained? and if the promise of life in the blade be not independent, much more is the promise of spiritual life not in itself, but in the grace of God.

The will and the word of God, as revealed in Holy Scripture, are our only ground of hope as to the growth and increase and fruitfulness of religion in any one's soul. Divines have woven manifold curious arguments, in support of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, out of assumed metaphysical *à priori* principles of necessity, involved, as they suppose, in the very nature of spiritual life itself. Some of them will not stand the test of a searching criticism. At the best, such arguments fail to sustain us under the stress and pressure of spiritual apprehension, fear, and anxiety; but the promise of God remains, and that is sufficient, “being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

The *immaturity* of the blade is as striking as its promise. That very promise supposes that the future is to be different from the present. The swelling of the ear—the ripeness of the full corn in the ear—bring out in vivid, effective con-

trast the immaturity of the blade. So, as we think of the developments of piety to follow in the life of the young Christian, these very developments throw us back again upon the thought of the infirmity and imperfection of the earlier stage of the Christian life.

Of course, at present, there is immaturity of knowledge, of judgment, of experience, of principle—even of faith and of feeling. There are many things of a spiritual kind which can be learnt only in process of time. In this respect, spiritual knowledge differs in no wise from any other kind of knowledge. Even the wondrous gifts of inspiration did not enable apostles, all at once, to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. It took them years and years to learn, even with the Holy Ghost for a teacher, what they were enabled to teach. Truth beautifully opened upon them, as they walked forwards in the ways of God; and a very instructive and profitable course of study it is for the readers of the New Testament to arrange chronologically the sacred contents, and then to mark how, step by step, truth breaks on the vision of the inspired seers.

And if in relation to dogmatic truth time is an essential condition of improvement, so in relation also to experimental and practical godliness time is indispensable for progress. We must pass through the stages of spiritual infancy and spiritual youth, before we can reach the maturity of spiritual manhood. We must, as spiritual children, acquire certain habits in order to the attainment of ease, and skill, and (if we may use the word) dexterity of practice as spiritual men.

Since the creation of Adam, the law of life has been growth through stages of immaturity to perfection, so far as that is attainable here below; and the length of the period of immaturity is according to the worth and dignity of the nature concerned. The lowest soonest ripens; the highest last. The duration of life is in proportion to the tardiness with which it comes to maturity. Between the blade and the ear in nature, there may be but a few weeks; between the blade and the ear in grace, there may be many years.

We are all fond of haste in its bad sense. To be in haste to do what is right, is praiseworthy; to be in haste to enjoy what we wish, is quite another thing. The haste of diligence, and the haste of impatience, stand wide apart. It is the latter kind of haste into which we are so apt to fall. We are in a hurry to enjoy, not to endeavour; to attain, not to toil; to reap, not to cultivate. We all *want* to be better than we are, we all *wish* to be better than we are, but we do not all *strive and agonise* to be better than we are. When some young Christians hear of the exploits of older ones in the cause of Jesus, they long to *do* like that; when they hear of the experience of advanced believers, they long to *feel* like that. But this is for the blade to wish to become the ear, without waiting to grow. Before any illustrious saint could achieve so much and enjoy so much, he had to do and suffer a great deal. Between the first, and even the middle chapters of our spiritual history, to say nothing of the last, there must come many intervening ones of work and warfare, of toil and tears.

## SAM'S SECRET.

BY CLEMENT W. SCOTT.

**H** MUST keep my promise, and tell you all about it, Mary, child," said old Sam, who had been fidgeting about nervously all the evening, and twisting a particular lock of his grey hair—a certain sign, as Mary knew, that he had something on his mind.

"All about what, father?"

Sam glanced at the white rose which was before him in a tumbler of water on the table, and then looked at his daughter. This was quite hint enough to Mary, and she could guess pretty easily now what subject was uppermost in her father's mind.

Old Sam was a widower—a widower of a very few weeks. The last grave in the little churchyard was not turfed over, and this white rose, which was fast withering away on the table, had rested on the breast of the woman who had died before it.

"I must keep my promise made to your poor

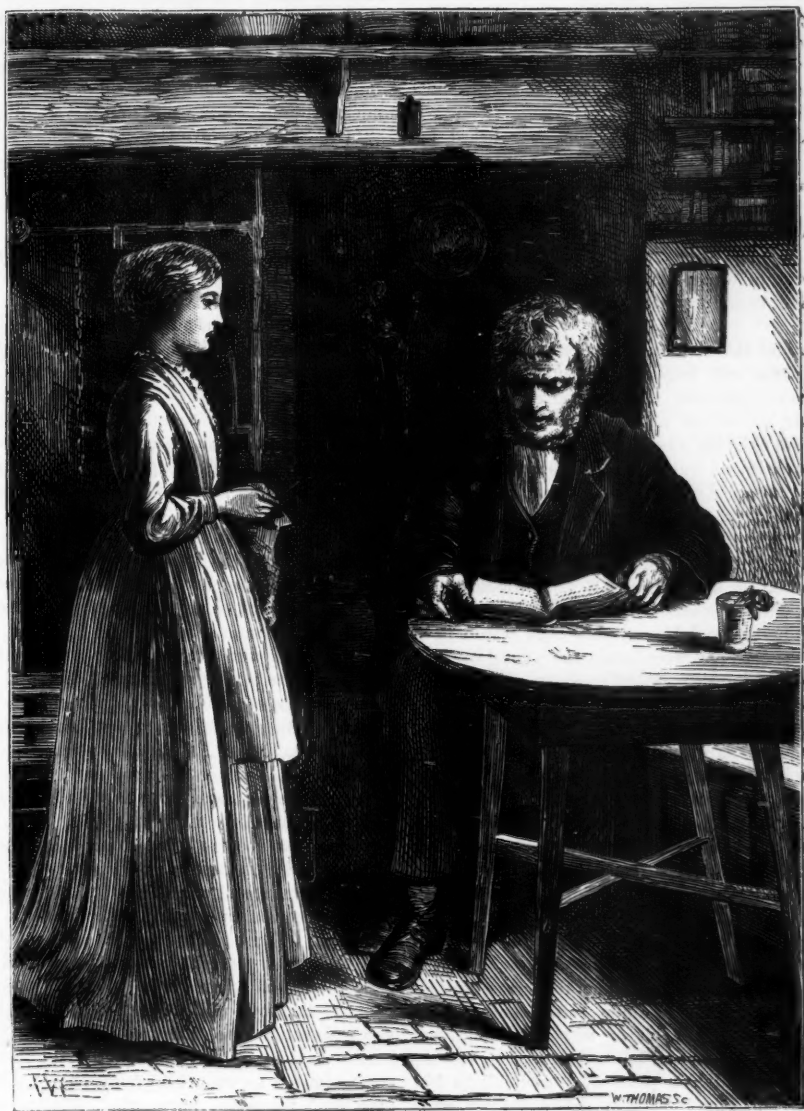
dear mother dead and gone, Mary," repeated Sam. "There must be no secrets between us; I have had enough of them."

"Don't distress yourself, father; any time will do. I don't think you ought to worry yourself so much just now."

"There's no time like the present, Mary. I wish I had thought so all my life; but, there, what's past can't be mended."

There had been a dreadful scene at her mother's death. Mary knew that. She had been dying slowly for many months, and as she became weaker and weaker, Sam's anxiety on her account became terrible in its intensity.

One night Sam left his daughter abruptly, and went up-stairs to his wife's room. There he remained for hours; and Mary, sitting alone, could hear her father's voice, as if he were telling a story. The voice was broken with sobs, and



(Drawn by H. Woods.)

"All about what, father?"—p. 456.

though Mary could see plainly when Sam returned that he had been crying, she knew by his face that he spoke the truth when he declared he was a happier man.

Very shortly after this, Mary's mother died; and now Sam was about to fulfil the promise made at his wife's deathbed, and tell his daughter the same story which had caused the sobs which Mary had heard.

"I don't suppose, Mary, you ever heard me speak of your Uncle Tom. There was reason enough for my not mentioning his name. But, for all that, you had an Uncle Tom. My brother Tom and I were twins. We were marvellously alike; so much alike that, as children, we puzzled our own mother, and I remember she tied a bit of red velvet round my neck to distinguish me from Tom.

"Besides this extraordinary resemblance in our faces, there was something wonderfully harmonious in our natures. A mysterious tie bound us together, and united us with more than brotherly love. As children we never quarrelled, and played together with as much gentleness as two kittens before a fire. As boys we did not fight, except for one another. If there was any disturbance at school, and some boy had done a mean act, or had insulted one or other of us, it was by no means uncommon for us to draw lots as to which of the two should administer a thrashing to the offender. It was pretty well known that Sam would fight Tom's battles, and woe betide the youngster who considered himself justified in abusing Sam in the presence of Tom.

"In the next village to us lived as bright and merry a girl as any in that part of the country. All the lads about were in love with her. She was just such another fair young fairy thing as you are, my Mary, with the face and temper of an angel. She did not win men with her ways, but by her sweet disposition. She was not one to go wasting her money in dress and finery, and all sorts of extravagances. She was a good girl at home, and a pattern girl abroad. At the flower-shows and village meetings about she was always by far the prettiest girl there; and she did not pine for beaux because her simple straw bonnet was crossed by a simple bit of ribbon, and did not glisten with bugles and butterflies.

"Who should this prize of a girl fall to but your Uncle Tom! Folks did say they were surprised how she could come to make a choice between us. But, there, she had sense enough for that. She knew, bless you, well enough which was Tom and which was Sam, and was far cleverer in one respect than our own mother, because she never required the bit of red velvet.

"There was no mistake about Nora's love for Tom. She showed it in every look and action.

They were very young; she only eighteen, and Tom but a year or two older; but it came to be an understood thing that, when they could scrape sufficient money together, they were to marry.

"Tom consulted me, of course. He consulted me about everything, for we were still more than brothers. He asked me whether I thought it would be a good thing that there should be an understanding between him and Nora.

"Oh, Sam, I do love that girl so," he said.

"Do you think she is true and good?"

"I know it," said Tom.

"I knew Tom was right. I knew perfectly well that she was as good and pure as the day. But still I hesitated, and, with Tom, was never enthusiastic about Nora. I was not jealous of the girl, or anything of that sort. I admired her, as all the young men about admired her, for her beauty and her worth, but that was all. I knew she did not care particularly for me, and I knew she adored Tom. I believe she knew his step in the road, for she was always ready to meet him at the gate, and it became quite a laugh in the village how Nora used to turn round sharp directly Tom passed under the church porch to his seat by her side on a Sunday morning.

"I was not jealous of Nora because Tom loved her and she loved Tom, but I was jealous because this love had somehow stepped in between my love for Tom, and threatened to break that mysterious union which had bound us so closely together. I knew that when my brother was married I should not see nearly so much of him, and that I should have a very different place in his heart than I had had before. This was a selfish but an unavoidable feeling. As it was, when they were courting, I did not see so much as usual of Tom. 'Two is company, and three is none,' and I kept discreetly out of the way.

"I was not used to being alone, and I am sorry to say I fell into bad ways. I went over to the town too much, and when Tom was away courting Nora, I was usually playing billiards at the inn in the town. There is not much harm, perhaps you will say, in a game of billiards, now and then, after dinner of a market-day; but these nightly visits to the town did me no good, I can assure you. I could read many of the young fellows hereabout a lesson, I can tell you. Not that I am one to be too severe with young people. Young men don't mean any harm when they go over to the town night after night; but they don't meet exactly the right kind of companions at the inn. Playing billiards is apt to lead to smoking, and smoking to drinking, and drinking leads to all sorts of bad ways, of which, no doubt, my girl, you know nothing, and I only pray you never may. The man who wins you will not be one of that sort, I will venture to say, and he will get a

treasure, though it's only your old father who says it.

"This was the way I gradually went down the ladder, when your Uncle Tom left me to court Nora. I was not as rich as many of the young fellows I met, and I got into debt.

"It was just at this time, and in this society, that I heard many fine stories about Australia, and the fortunes that were made there every day.

"I became more and more restless, and sick of home, every day. Up-hill work was tedious and irksome to me. I asked myself why I should plod on wearily in England for mere subsistence, while with the same strength and energy—which I once possessed, and felt would be revived again—I might make a fortune in Australia, and come home and end my days comfortably at home.

"My argument was not so unsound after all. This was in the early days of the colonies, when fortunes did turn up unexpectedly as a reward to perseverance and industry. But all this is changed now. Australia and the adjacent colonies are overstocked with adventurers; and without capital it is a difficult matter to live decently, let alone making a fortune. This was the day-dream of my life. I had no heart for the work I was put to on my father's farm. My thoughts were far away from England—in that great mysterious country thousands of miles from home.

"A happy 'stroke of luck' occurred at this time, which coincided with my ambition on the subject of Australia.

"I was not doing well in England, and now I had no particular ties to bind me to home. Tom was always with Nora in his spare hours.

"I received an offer to accompany the son of our squire to Australia. He had always taken a fancy to me, and was one of the free-and-easy ones himself. Here was a chance of realising all my dreams. When it came to the point, there was only one great obstacle. I should have to leave Tom. Before, I had never quite realised this. Time had not altogether gone so well with Tom as might be. He was in no position to marry yet.

"'Why should he not go with us?' I thought. The young squire, I knew, would make no objection, and would be as ready to take two as one.

"I went that night to Nora's father's cottage, where I knew I should find my brother Tom. There he was, sure enough. I was resolved that there should be no beating about the bush, and I was determined that I would not be thwarted in my purpose as far as I was concerned.

"The young squire is bound for this new country, Australia, Tom,' said I, 'and he has asked me to go with him.'

"And you will not go, of course,' said Tom,

remembering that we were twin brothers, and only thinking of the old days.

"Why not?"

"Because we have never been parted before, Sam."

"Here your Uncle Tom came across the room from where he was sitting by Nora's side, and took my hand.

"But we must be parted soon, Tom, for ever."

"Here I looked at Nora, who lowered her eyes.

"Oh, Sam, think what you are doing."

"I have thought of everything, and I have promised the squire to go with him."

"And not ask me, Sam?"

"I should have asked you in the old days," and again I looked at Nora, for I was cut to the heart at leaving my brother, and, selfish-like, was venting my sorrow on the girl who had done no more harm than love Tom.

"The young squire does not want to separate us, Tom."

"How do you mean?"

"He wants us to make our fortunes together."

"What, at home?"

"No, out there in foreign parts."

"Here Nora pricked up her ears, but she did not quite understand as yet what my meaning was.

"Let's have no beating about the bush, Sam; tell us what you mean."

"I mean that the squire wants to take us both."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Nora in another minute was in Tom's arms, and I am bound to say she did not look very kindly at me. I felt for Tom, and felt for Nora too. Naturally I wanted my brother to accompany us. They were both young, and I thought they could well afford to wait a little longer before they were married.

"I am to go up to the squire to night, Tom, with your decision. Meanwhile I will take a walk in the village." I saw they wanted to be alone.

"When I returned I saw they had both been crying, but I saw by the smile on Nora's face that hers were tears of happiness.

"Well, Tom, what answer am I to give to the squire?"

"Dear old Sam,' said your Uncle Tom, 'I cannot go with you, for I cannot leave Nora.'

"Then I knew we should be separated, and that I should go to Australia without my brother.

"It is no use lingering over the parting. It was a very bitter one, particularly for me.

"I was leaving England and home; Tom was remaining behind. Tom had a Nora to console him; I hadn't.

"In the course of a year or two a marked difference occurred in our lives: I flourished in Australia, Tom withered at home. Two or three

bad seasons ruined our poor old father, and he died in debt. It required all Tom's energy to keep his head above water after honestly paying his father's creditors. He was further off from Nora than ever. Marriage just at that time seemed hopeless.

"By every mail I renewed my entreaties to Tom to join me in Australia. I buoyed him up with golden hopes of success, and a prospect of sending for Nora in a very short time. At last he consented. He left his intended wife at home, and came across the sea to his twin brother in Australia. Fortune again smiled on us. We worked together happily and successfully, and with renewed energy, now we were together.

"Before the first year of our union was ended I had an offer to manage a farm in New Zealand. As it was almost the time for sending for Nora, Tom persuaded me to accept the appointment, and I left.

"I should say that at this time we were growing more and more like one another. Now that, settler fashion, our faces were covered with hair, it was really hardly possible to tell us apart. We were constantly being taken the one for the other.

"When I was in New Zealand, strange to say, Tom only corresponded with me at rare intervals. I was very much puzzled at this. My letters were frequent. In all I asked questions about Nora, and Tom's plans for sending for her, as he had now a comfortable home and ample provision for a wife. But to none of these questions did I receive a definite answer. I was five years in New Zealand, and by that time had scraped together a tidy bit of money. There was little use in my remaining in New Zealand, away from Tom. I flattered myself that we should both be happier together again.

"When I got back to Australia, I discovered how matters stood. Nora had not yet joined Tom, and for a very good reason—because Nora had been supplanted in Tom's heart by another. Tom was married to some one else!

"But have you not written to her?" I asked.

"No, Sam, I did not dare. I have behaved infamously to that girl."

"Does she still write to you?"

"Constantly."

"Well, something must be done, Tom. This is unmanly."

"I have thought over it night and day. There is only one thing that can now be done."

"What is that?"

"You alone, Sam, can lessen my fault."

"How so?"

"Go home, Sam, and for my sake marry Nora."

"Marry Nora!"

"Yes, Sam," and then he lowered his voice; "marry her, and never let her know that it is not

me. You know how we resemble one another. These years in the colonies have increased the likeness, and Nora need never hear of my infidelity. You will make her a good and kind husband, you may possibly prevent her experiencing great sorrow, and will take a great load off my heart."

"I was fairly staggered at the proposition. On reflection, it did not seem so preposterous, and eventually I yielded to my brother's entreaties.

"I was anxious to marry and settle down at home. Tom's new home and new wife had no particular charms for me. I was not in love with any woman in the colonies, or indeed with any woman at home in England. Though I did not love Nora then, I liked her quite well enough to marry her for her worth, and save my brother from the distress he had really brought upon himself.

"I came to England, Mary, my child; I passed myself off for my brother Tom, and married Nora, your mother. I never shall forget that first look of hers when we met. The light seemed to die out of her eyes when they met mine. It was not the change of face which startled her. Years of absence might naturally alter her old lover! It must have been the change of being which she instinctively noticed. As far as she could believe her senses I was her lover Tom, her playfellow and friend of her girlhood. But something within her whispered that it was not the same Tom from whom she had parted in tears when his ship sailed for Australia.

"We married, Mary, and I kept my promise. Over and over again I have felt what a cowardly trick I played on your mother. There was something terrible in hearing her allude to old days and old occurrences; something sad to notice how wonderingly she looked at me occasionally, half believing, and yet never quite believing, that I was not Tom after all. Save for these circumstances, I have never regretted the marriage. No better wife ever breathed, no purer woman ever lived.

"This secret of my life has been a terrible burden to bear, but I was determined that this dear woman should not pass out of the world with my secret untold.

"She forgave me all before she died."

Here Mary's father put the withering flower reverently to his lips, and kissed it.

"The only penance she inflicted on me for my fault was to tell the story to you, my child.

"I have kept my promise. Will you forgive me, now?"

Mary put her arms about her father's neck, and forgave him with her kisses.

"Father," said Mary that night before she went to bed, "shall I ever see Uncle Tom?"

"Yes, my darling; he may come home now."

"MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS."



TO say to any one, "Mind your own business," would be, if the person addressed had passed beyond the state of childhood, an act of very questionable policy. It is a form of words which you would not employ except in an unguarded moment, and which, whenever employed, may be considered as the result of irritation on the one hand, and as a very certain cause of irritation on the other. You may not unjustly feel annoyed, as you see some one neglect his own business, and unwarrantably interfere with yours; but if you are wise, if you do not want to make that person your enemy, you will not say, "Mind your own business." And yet, though we prudently repress the utterance, there is scarcely any form of words which we are more frequently tempted to use. "Mind your own business" is a colloquialism, which expresses in a rough and ready, and decidedly offensive, manner, what, if uttered at all, needs to be rather carefully and delicately enunciated. If any one were to bid us *mind our own business*, we should be very apt to resent the interference, imagining, and perhaps justly imagining, that we know what our own proper business is as well as the stranger who admonishes us to attend to it.

It does not immediately appear what there is in the form of the admonition to render it so universally unpalatable as it unquestionably is. You may easily anger the most meek-spirited of men by merely saying, "Mind your own business." But when we look at the phrase more closely, we need not wonder that the use of it becomes the occasion of offence. When you tell a man to mind his own business, you insinuate that he does not know what his own business is; or that, knowing, he does not attend to it; or that, neglecting his own, he has an unfortunate tendency to intermeddle with other people's. All this may be very true, but as a rule it is an unthankful and rather dangerous office to remind men of their infirmities.

When we turn to God's Word, we find that this piece of wholesome but unsavoury advice is addressed to us all. We are told that we should "study to be quiet, and to do our own business," (1 Thess. iv. 11). And as we listen to this advice we can have no feelings of proud and angry resentment awakened, for here it is administered to us by One who addresses us, not only with all the urgency of affectionate and friendly counsel, but also with all the sanction of royal authority. It is the Lord of heaven and earth, of men and of angels, who lays this injunction upon us. He who knows what is in man, who knows what is

man's true business, and who knows, also, how commonly he neglects it, here reminds us all that we should study—make it our aim—to do our own business.

One cannot help thinking what a happy change would pass over the world if men, always and everywhere, were but to mind their own business. Taking these words in their ordinary and most literal signification, do they not suggest to the mind "a consummation devoutly to be wished?"

What a good thing it would be for the world and for the interests of mankind at large, if *nations* were but to mind their own business; if they were but to study to be quiet, to do their own proper work, to develop the resources which they possess, and promote the material and general interests of the mass and multitude of their population, instead of intermeddling in affairs with which they have no concern.

This minding of one's own business is to be insisted on, not merely as a matter of expediency, but as a Christian duty; not merely because it is that which will contribute to our comfort and the comfort of others, but also and chiefly because it is the will and wish of God. The religion which we profess is profitable for all things—for the life which now is, and for that which is to come. We have rules given us for our guidance in life and godliness. God not only sets before us the great realities of eternity, but he condescends to regulate our conduct here. Take, for instance, the particular duty we are now considering. You must have observed how strongly and repeatedly it is insisted on. If we look to the preceptive portions of the Old Testament, and especially the Proverbs of Solomon—which it is to be feared we greatly neglect—we find that over and over again men are bidden to mind their own business. And when we come to the New Testament, we find words of the strongest censure and reprobation addressed to those who are negligent in, or who wander out of, their own proper calling, and who (the two things are nearly always found in conjunction) are busybodies, meddlers in other men's matters. He who attends diligently to his own business, will have but little time and little inclination to interfere unnecessarily with that of other people.

The form of the injunction with which we are presented in this Scripture is very expressive. We are to study to be quiet, and to do our own business. Every man has his own proper business: let him attend to that; let that be the sphere in which he moves and works. Positively, he is to mind his own business; negatively, he is to let other people's alone; and if he but abide

in his own business, his non-interference with other people's will follow as a matter of course.

We must be careful to interpret this injunction in such a way that it may consist with the other and general teaching of God's Word. We are not to understand it as affording any warrant or encouragement for a selfish disregard of others, their rights, their interests, their advantage. Some would excuse themselves from every display of sympathy, and from all activity of benevolence, on the ground that they have enough to do in minding their own business. The same Scriptures, however, which teach us to mind our own business, teach us not to regard exclusively our own affairs, but each also the affairs of others. We are required to exercise a benevolent and philanthropic spirit. We are to do good unto all men, and especially unto those who are of the household of faith. We are to account every one as our neighbour who needs our help. We are to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. We are not to look with apathetic or haughty indifference upon the strife, the ignorance, the misery of the world, and leave things to drift on from bad to worse, on the plea that we are to mind our own business; but rather are we to gird ourselves for active service and resolute encounter, and to go forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Our Saviour, in one of his most beautiful parables, fixes the stigma of his disapproval upon those who selfishly mind their own business. The priest and the Levite, who passed in cold neglect the wounded and half-dead traveller on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, were so diligently minding their business that they would not even cast a hasty glance across the road lest they should be hindered by the imploring look of the dying man. But our Saviour does not bid us imitate them in their selfish diligence; but rather the Samaritan, who was ready to let his business stand still for a little, so that he might show compassion and render help. Let us remember, then, that minding our own business serves not as an excuse for neglecting others. We are not to live in the quiet and selfish enjoyment of our own privileges, forgetting that there are those who lack what we enjoy, and that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God, holding the very Gospel in trust. It is our business to struggle against the various forms of evil, which are exercising so depressing and deadly an influence in the world. It is our business to be helpful to those of our fellow-men who need such help as we can render. It is our business to enlighten those who are ignorant, to raise those who are fallen, to recover those who have wandered, to comfort those who mourn—remembering that the Gospel which secures glory to God

in the highest, proclaims peace on earth and goodwill towards men. We see, then, that while we are required to mind our own business, we are not to do it in that spirit of selfishness which will lead us to disregard the interests, the rights, the well-being of others; but in the spirit of our Divine Master, who, though he felt straitened till his own proper work was done, was ever ready to pause in the way, that he might speak some word, or do some deed, of kindness.

We now come to the consideration of the greater and graver question—In what does a man's true business in this world really consist? No one can mind his own business, attend to it, remain in it, who knows not what it is. And there are many who give evidence of being deplorably ignorant in this matter. There are many who diligently attend to their own business up to a certain point, within certain limits, but who err seriously—perhaps fatally—in taking too narrow and restricted a view of the subject. If a man were only a citizen of this present world—if he were related only to those things which are seen and temporal—if there were no God to serve and glorify—if man had no undying soul to care for—if the only problems claiming solution were, What shall I eat? what shall I drink? wherewithal shall I be clothed?—then are there very many who might be commended for minding their own business. But if we look, as we are compelled to look, at the other side of the question, if we consider the claims of the other and larger side of man's nature, if we take into account the relations he sustains to God as well as man, and to eternity as well as time, then must all confess that these same persons miserably fail of attending to what is pre-eminently their business in this world.

How many worthy, successful, reputable persons are there, who may be charged with living in habitual neglect of all those things which are really of the greatest moment.

Let us try and take a common-sense and practical view of this subject. Man has a soul as well as a body: he has to spend a short and uncertain period in this world, an eternity in another. What does reason say in reference to this? What does Scripture say—whose utterances are ever those of the highest reason? Is it wise, is it right, is it safe, to attend to the claims of the body to the exclusion or neglect of those of the soul? Can we with impunity bestow our attention on the interests of time, to the exclusion or neglect of all preparation for eternity? Let Scripture, reason, and conscience answer.

We have in Scripture an instance of a man who minded his own business very diligently, and very successfully, up to a certain point, but not beyond. He was a farmer and a landed proprietor, who attended to his business, and managed his land so

well, that it produced in such rich abundance, that he had not room wherein to bestow his goods, and was obliged to pull down his barns and build greater. This man's praises were, I doubt not, very widely celebrated in all that country-side. He was just the person who would be sure to come in for a great deal of commendation—a sagacious, reputable, successful man of the world; one to whom fathers would point in the presence of their sons, not only as a very successful man, but a man who had so eminently succeeded because he ever minded his own business. Well, what is God's judgment concerning him? Just as he had attained to what seemed to him and his neighbours the very climax of prosperity—just as he had said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, God said to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

How many are there, in all grades of society, who diligently mind their own business in this limited and insufficient way? How many are there who prosper in the business of the world, and find themselves bankrupts for eternity? Let us remember that while minding our own business, we may lose our own soul; and we may succeed in doing this, though only engaged in a very small way of business. Is there any folly comparable with this folly? Reason and Scripture alike admonish us to attend first of all, and most of all, to those things which are of the greatest importance—to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, trusting that all other things will be added to us; and to be sure, that with all our getting, we obtain "the one thing needful!"—

"Sufficient in itself alone,  
And needful were the world our own."

What in the name of Scripture and common sense is a man's business in this world, if it be not to look after the interests of his soul, and to make all possible provision for that eternity which he anticipates? And remembering that this salvation includes the renewal and sanctification of man's entire nature, it may be fearlessly affirmed that he who most diligently and conscientiously attends to this, the supreme business of life, will be found most attentive to the subordinate claims

of life, and in proportion to his general ability will be found most adequately discharging its minor duties.

If the Scriptural representations of man's moral and spiritual condition be strictly and literally correct, it must appear to every reasonable person that the first, the supreme business of life, is to become savingly interested in the provisions of the Gospel. Are we suffering from a deadly disease?—is it not our business to seek after a sufficient remedy? Are we enslaved?—should we not seek to be emancipated from the bonds of our captivity, and led forth from the darkness of our prison-house? Are we as condemned sinners lying under the curse and penalty of a broken law?—what more important than that we should seek an interest in Christ's atoning blood, and desire to hear those words of absolution which God alone has authority to pronounce? Are we defiled by sin?—how necessary is it that we should make our appeal to Him who says, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!" Are we poor?—may we not most reasonably go to Him who can enrich us with the unsearchable riches of Christ, and satisfy our need out of his inexhaustible fulness? Are we naked?—shall we not seek to be clothed with Christ's righteousness? Are we miserable?—shall we not seek to be made happy with Heaven's own benediction? What is our true business, if it be not to attend to interests so sublime and important as these? And what a miserable—what an irreparable—mistake will they be found to have committed who, having attended with all diligence to the present and passing interests of this life, have neglected the claims of their soul and the interests of eternity! "For what is a man profited, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" May God give us grace so to mind our own business in this lower sphere, as that, on the great day of account, we may hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## GRUMBLES; OR, THE ADVENTURES OF A "LITTLE TURK."



"LITTLE Turk!" that's what everybody calls me; though what they mean by it, I am sure I don't know. If I get behind Cousin Fred's chair, when he's talking very quietly to sister Jeannie, and suddenly pull his hair, he calls me a "little Turk;" and once when I found a pot of jam open

on the kitchen table, and took ever such a little piece to taste what kind it was of, mamma called me a "regular little Turk."

Everybody does! Sister Annie is younger than I, and she is never called by such an ugly name. I don't like it at all; though I wouldn't tell everybody that, because I think they would laugh at me, and I

don't like being laughed at; it makes me cry, and then people say, "What a little Turk she is!" meaning me, you know.

I do hate lessons, and can't bear to learn any, unless I am obliged. I don't see why I should; for I never remember them the next day, so they can't do me any good. I often tell mamma that; but she won't see it, and makes me learn them, the hateful things! I think mamma would be much wiser if she let me wait a few years, and then, if I could play more now, perhaps I should not be such a little Turk.

Now I will tell you about such a fine piece of fun I had after school-time. The other day I found a strange cat that had come into the garden, and was fighting with my own little black pussy. They would not leave off, and I thought I would cure them; for if little girls ought not to fight, I am sure it must be wicked for cats to do so. So I got a piece of string off the ball that I had been using for my sweet peas, and tied their tails together. I had such a trouble to catch the kitties, and it was so funny to see them tugging and tugging, each trying to run a different way, and only throwing themselves down.

Oh! how I laughed; and while I was laughing, papa came out, and was angry with me. He said I was a naughty, cruel girl, and would not let me have tea with him and mamma. But I came down-stairs, and listened at the door; for I knew what they would all call me when they heard about it.

They were all talking of me, and I was just in time to hear Cousin Fred say, "I have always told you what a little Turk she is."

But, at any rate, I think I cured the naughty cats of fighting. I am sure it served them right, and that I was more to be pitied than they. Would you like to be sent to the nursery, and have only bread-and-butter for tea, while Annie, and Jeannie, and Cousin Fred were eating cake and jam, and all sorts of nice things down-stairs?

I don't like my nurse; she is so unkind to me, and says such nasty things. Only a day or two ago papa asked me if I would like to go with him for a drive. Of course I said yes; and then Annie cried out, "Oh! papa, do take me." There was not room for both of us, and as I was the elder, and had been asked, I didn't see why I should not go.

Papa asked nurse who most deserved the treat, and she said Annie, directly. She told papa, too, that I was selfish, and a disappointment would do me good. The worst of all was, that papa believed all she told him, and did not see how ill-natured she was.

Then after they had gone, and I was crying so that I could not see to do my work, nurse told me that "of all my mother's children, I loved myself the best."

I wonder why the soap will go down my throat and up my nose, so that I am nearly choked, when I am being washed. Nurse says it doesn't serve Annie so; but then she likes Annie. Nobody's hair was

ever tugged and pulled as mine is, and yet nurse never makes it curl like Jeannie's does; but if I want to peep into the glass, and see if it looks pretty and nice, she calls me a "vain little Turk."

But I had nearly forgotten to tell you one of the worst of all my adventures, as Cousin Fred will call them, when I tell him about all the troublesome things that worry me so.

Nurse is so frightened of fire, that she would let us be in the dark, rather than leave us alone in a room where there was a light. I think it is very silly of nurse to be so timid—I am not. I lighted a bonfire once, when I was staying at Aunt Wilding's, and my cousins John and Gar said I was "something like a girl!" but when aunt found it out, she was very angry.

Though I am not frightened of fire, I don't like being left in the dark, and nurse knows that; but she is so disagreeable, and says, "If I was a good little girl, I should not mind it." I like to frighten her, so I got behind the door in mamma's room, and put my head under the sheets—and then, you know, nobody could tell where my voice came from—and just as nurse was passing the door, I screamed out, "Fire! fire! fire!"

I heard her run into the next room; and while she was looking round, I slipped into the closet where all mamma's dresses are hung, and kept on screaming out, "Fire!"

Nurse came into the room where I was, and looked about for a few minutes, and then went down-stairs.

As soon as she had gone, I thought I would come out; but the door would not open. I kicked and screamed, but nobody came, so there I was in the dark.

I should think I had been there quite an hour before I heard some one come into the room. I took care to make them hear me this time; and, oh! was I not glad to get out again.

It was a long time before I had the courage to play nurse another trick; but she did provoke me so. To frighten her, I took a piece of lighted paper and put it before my face, to make nurse think I was on fire. She was working in another part of the room, with her back turned to me, and seeing the glare, she turned round, and looked so frightened! She jumped up, and said, "Why, missy, your hair is all ablaze."

I was laughing to myself to think how I had taken her in; but all of a sudden my face felt so hot, and my head hurt me so! I put up my hand, and, sure enough, my hair was as nurse had told me, all ablaze.

Nurse soon put it out; but the fright made me ill, and though it is more than a month ago, my hair has not grown yet, and I look quite a fright.

Nurse says I am the most tiresome child she has ever seen, and wonders what will become of me. I don't mean to be naughty—I only do it for fun. I wonder what will become of me?

L. M. C.